



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI REJECTS “FATALLY FLAWED” PROPOSAL TO FORCE
UNIONIZATION ON STATE, LOCAL FIRST RESPONDERS
SAYS BILL IS “TERRIBLE POLICY,” WOULD IMPOSE ENORMOUS
UNFUNDED MANDATES, DIMINISH NATIONAL SECURITY, AND TRAMPLE
WORKER RIGHTS***

Washington D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-WY, Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee), said he is strongly opposed to the Democrat proposal to impose unionization on state and local first responders, adding that the bill would jeopardize national security, impose an enormous unfunded mandate on states and towns, and trample the rights of first responders in the workplace.

“Make no mistake: the only direct beneficiaries of this legislation are labor unions,” Enzi said. “The bill does not contain a dime of money or a single provision that would increase the pay or benefits of any firefighter, police officer or first responder. There is nothing in this bill that would enhance their working conditions, make their jobs safer, or their retirement more secure. It only imposes totally unfunded costs on states, cities and towns that will make those exact results less, not more, likely.”

Enzi said that the bill, HR 980, the so-called Public Employer-Employee Cooperation Act, would jeopardize national security by eliminating the right of states to take certain items off the bargaining table, like manning and staffing levels, training and job requirements, deadly force rules, drug-testing, merit pay and promotion.

“If you don’t think this is a problem, look at the utterly shameful situation in major league baseball. Despite widespread documented and suspected use of drugs, we have seen the inability to achieve any meaningful resolution even after years and years of collective bargaining. Here’s the difference: Baseball is a game. Public safety is not. Imagine if there were reports of drug use among your local first responders, but your town could do nothing about it? That’s what this bill would allow.”

Enzi, a former mayor and the Senate’s only accountant, said the bill would

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impose an “enormous unfunded mandate” on local governments trying to balance their budgets.

“The administrative costs alone of collective bargaining represent a very significant concern for states, cities, and especially small towns. These additional requirements are enormously costly and burdensome,” Enzi said. “This bill would impose those costs by federal mandate, but would not provide one single penny of federal money to help offset those costs. The Democrat Congress wants to buy off big labor, and is trying to stick America’s small towns with the bill.”

The bill would force collective bargaining on states but would not require or ensure fundamental employee rights, including the right of a worker to decide whether to join a union by secret ballot. It would not require unions to report on their finances publicly or ensure that workers have the right information about their union’s finances, and it fails to contain any guarantees to workers about how their union dues money can be spent.

Enzi highlighted several key problems with the process by which the Senate is considering the legislation, which he called “terrible policy being badly executed.” Enzi pointed out that the proposal would overturn nearly eight decades of national law, conflicts with the laws of as many as 26 states, and would raise profound Constitutional issues - yet neither the HELP Committee nor the Senate as a whole have had any meaningful opportunity to debate the bill.

“This is another labor bill that isn’t going through the Labor Committee,” Enzi said. “Instead, we’re playing Gotcha Politics yet again.”

“Proponents of this bill want to overhaul decades of federal law and overturn the law in a majority of states. You would think the Senate would consider a bill of such enormous consequence only after careful examination and due process and deliberation, but you would be wrong. This legislation has not had a single Committee hearing or vote this Congress.”

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